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## Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon

February 15, 2021

Chair Power, Vice Chairs Reynolds and Zika, and Members of the Committee:

Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon respectfully requests the committee's support of House Bills 2503 and 3073, which seek to expand access to affordable childcare, support childcare business owners, and streamline governance of the Employment Related Day Care program.

The child care crisis that existed before the COVID-19 pandemic is now a state of emergency for parents, providers, and kids across Oregon. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services benchmark that child care affordability is seven percent of income.<sup>1</sup> At that standard, families need an income over \$200,000 annually to afford full-time care for one infant in Oregon. A minimum-wage worker in rural Oregon would need to work full time for nearly 34 weeks, or from January to August, just to pay for child care for one infant.

Despite how prohibitively expensive child care is for parents, child care providers (who are disproportionately Black, Indigenous, and women of color) are among the lowest-paid workers in Oregon. In 2018, the median wage of preschool teachers, many of whom are college-educated, was \$13.95 an hour, and was \$11.86 for child care workers in Oregon. Average annual wages in child care are about half the all-industry Oregon average.<sup>2</sup> This year has made even clearer how essential child care is—it is essential work that makes all other work possible—and yet, we don't compensate providers accordingly.

More than 50% of Oregon's pre-COVID child care slots are gone. Forty percent of providers are closed, unlikely to ever reopen.<sup>3</sup> This means that parents are scrambling to find reliable child care options as they continue to work either from home or in their workplaces. Hardest hit are the 350,000 Oregonians (17% of the labor force) who do not work in occupations that allow them to work from home.<sup>4</sup> Of the options that parents might have, not all of them meet their families' unique needs—like irregular work schedules or language spoken—and parents across the state often find themselves patching together care just so they can get to work.

In December 2020, all jobs lost in the United States were women's jobs, with women losing 156,000 jobs and men gaining 16,000. The COVID impacts of job loss hit Black and Latinx women more aggressively: between January and December 2020, nearly 2.1 million women left the labor force, including 564,000 Black women and 317,000 Latinas.<sup>5</sup> The economic impact of COVID-19 on women has been sustained throughout the pandemic. In December, about 2 in 5 unemployed women had been out of work for 6 months or longer, including about 41% of Black women, 38% of Latinas, and 44% of Asian women.

If we don't act now, we are facing decades of setbacks for women's economic security with the largest burden placed on women who identify as Black, Indigenous, and/or other people of color (BIPOC).<sup>6</sup> COVID-19 has laid bare the insufficiencies of our current child care system. It will take a long-term, sustained effort to rebuild a child care system that truly works for all our families. In the meantime, we can start with House Bills 3073 and 2503, which will:

- Streamline governance by housing our state's child care subsidy program, Employment Related Day Care (ERDC), with other early learning and child care programs. This realignment will allow

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<sup>1</sup> <https://bipartisanpolicy.org/blog/demystifying-child-care-affordability/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://familyforwardoregon.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/FFO-Child-Care-Report-2019-REV.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.opb.org/news/article/oregons-childcare-system-faces-uncertain-future/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://oregoneconomicanalysis.com/2020/08/27/covid-challenges-working-oregon-parents-graphic-of-the-week/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://nwlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/December-Jobs-Day.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <https://nwlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/December-Jobs-Day.pdf>

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for a more seamless coordination and coverage of services between ERDC and other programs like Preschool Promise and Early Head Start. It also allows the state to be strategic about purchasing child care to rebuild the sector after devastating losses during the pandemic.

- Reform ERDC into a child care assistance program that better serves low-income and BIPOC families, as well as providing fair compensation for the child care business owners and educators—predominantly BIPOC women and other women—who perform this critical work.

Child care is necessary for joyful children, thriving families, and a strong economy. Every Oregon family deserves access to high quality, affordable, and culturally relevant child care, and every child care provider should be paid a wage that reflects the essential work they do. We can take the first steps to get there with House Bills 2503 and 3073. Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon urges your support for these important bills.

Sincerely,

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Interim Executive Director  
Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon